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## ON RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Sir,—The part of your paper which I often read with most interest, and which I have reason to believe that others read with equal satisfaction, is the correspondence. Although a Protestant myself, yet I always like to see what able and well informed Roman Catholics can say in defence of the faith of their church; and I am sure it will be generally admitted, that many of the letters which, from time to time, have appeared in your journal, from Roman Catholics, have done great credit to their ability and learning.

There is one point, however, in which I must confess I feel disappointed. All these letters have been from laymen, and no Roman Catholic priest has ever come forward to accept the challenge you have so often given, to enter upon an amicable and temperate discussion of the leading points of controversy between the two churches. And why should this be so? St. Peter has left the Christian church an express command on this point, which I think no one claiming the character and office of a Christian minister can safely afford to disregard. "Be ready *always* to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter iii., 15). If all the ministers of a religion will always keep obstinately silent, they have only themselves to blame if the public at last conclude that they have not much to say for themselves.

The chief reason for my writing to you is to call your attention to the reasons which Mr. Faber, in a work lately published, gives for the silence of his brother priests, but which, I must confess, appears to me far from satisfactory. It is plain, from his remarks, that he was galled and nettled at hearing the charge put forward in some quarter or other, when he must have been conscious that there was so much reason and truth in it; and his efforts at defence seem to leave the matter pretty much where it stood before. He says (*vide* the "Blessed Sacrament", page 371):—

"From the Council of Trent downwards, the church has had a succession of theologians of the most profound thought and the most brilliant genius, yet we hardly ever see in modern Anglican controversy the slightest vestige of the writers having read Vasquez, Suarez, De Lugo, Viva, and the like, but, on the contrary, plain evidence that they have not."

Surely, if Roman Catholic priests have all the arguments ready made to their hand, by "theologians of the most profound thought and the most brilliant genius," it would be, to say the least, but common charity to their erring Protestant brethren to bring forth a few crumbs of spiritual food from their abundant stores, especially when the editor of the CATHOLIC LAYMAN promises to be at the cost of paper and print.

But, sir, I think Mr. Faber does plain injustice when he speaks of modern Anglican writers not affording the slightest vestige of having read the works of Vasquez, Suarez, and the like. Sure I am that I have, more than once, seen their names in the foot-notes of your pages; and, I will make bold to say, that you have given more copious citations and references to their great champion, Cardinal Bellarmine, than are to be found in many Romish works of theology. Mr. Faber's excuse, therefore, will not apply to you. And, indeed, when I turned over to the next page of his book, I saw pretty plainly that he felt his own argument insufficient. When men cannot give a good defence for themselves, they generally lose their temper; and so Mr. Faber, for want of satisfactory reasons, begins to scold and call names. Here is what follows:—

"And yet, these very men (the Anglican divines before mentioned) are writing books which professedly treat of theological subjects, and when we ignore them, or leave their *precious lucubrations* unanswered, they think it passing strange and *peevish* in us that we can find anything more important or more interesting in life than to answer their objections, which have been answered completely a hundred years ago."

The italics, I may remark, are mine, not Mr. Faber's; but the whole tone of the passage indicates an uneasy consciousness that, after all, these "*precious lucubrations*," as he terms them, *ought* to be answered, and that priests are apt to grow fretful and "*peevish*" when they are asked to reply to them, and are obliged, from some cause or other, to maintain an obstinate silence.

I hope, sir, that out of the two thousand priests in Ireland, some one will at length be found willing to commence a discussion in your pages, of one or more of the chief points of controversy. I am confident that his arguments would be read with deep interest by all your numerous readers, both Roman Catholic and Protestant; and the character for impartiality which you have so justly earned would, I am sure, induce you to take every care that both sides should have fair play.—I am, sir, yours, &c.,

A MUNSTER MAN.

We feel obliged to our correspondent for directing our attention to Mr. Faber's remarks. We agree with him in thinking that there must be some other reasons for the silence of the Roman Catholic priests than those which Mr. Faber puts forward. For ourselves, we can only repeat, what we have a dozen times said already, that

our pages are freely open to any Roman Catholic correspondent, whether priest or layman, who, in a candid and temperate spirit, desires to lay his views before the public. Our only object is the promotion of truth.

## THE EFFECT OF PRAYER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

YOUR HONOUR,—On the last Sunday in October, I was passing a church after dusk in the evening, and thinks I, I'll just turn in, and sure nobody will know it. Well, your honour, I was well pleased; for sure I heard the Protestants singing the hymn of the Blessed Virgin herself, where she said that all generations should call her blessed; and thinks I, the Protestants can't be so bad at all—sure it can't be their religion to hate the Blessed Virgin when they sing that. But it isn't about that I am writing at all, your honour; it's about the beautiful prayer that ever I heard with my mortal ears; and there was a man kneeling down beside me that had a prayer-book, and he let me read it, and I just took and got it by heart; and it's night and morning I'll pray that prayer, for sure it's just the very prayer I want; and I'll tell it to your honour, for sure I have it by heart, and maybe there is other poor men would be as glad of it as me. Well, your honour, here it is—

"Grant, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen."

Well, now, if God would just give me pardon and peace, and just cleanse me from all my sins, instead of sending me running after stations, and penances, and indulgences, and still hunting for pardon and peace and never finding it, and trying to leave a little money behind me, to pay for masses to get me peace when I was dead; if he would just get me quit of all that, and give me pardon and peace now, and cleanse me of my sins at once, isn't it I that would love to serve Him with a quiet mind, after what He done for me. So, your honour, I never quit praying the beautiful prayer I got. Well, your honour, as I was walking away, who would I fall in with only the clergyman himself, and he bid me good evening kindly, and asked me was I in church; and I told him I heard the beautiful prayer at all; and many's the time, says I, I wished for a prayer like that. And did you never hear it before? says he. Never heard it before, your reverence, says I. And were you never at mass, on this Sunday of the year? says he. Always regular, your reverence, says I. Then you always heard that same prayer, says he. Please your reverence, says I, as I'm a living man, I never heard that prayer afore, since pussy was a cat. Well, your honour, up comes a man and calls him away, in a hurry to see a man that was dying, so I couldn't learn any more out of him, and I didn't know what to think at all. Well, the next day, I meets a neighbour that was just come out of Dublin, and he has with him a beautiful blue book, that was just written by Dr. Dixon; that's our primate, your honour. Well, I hadn't much time for the book, only I just read the first chapter, that told how he was at Rome itself, and how he saw the Pope, and give him a copy of book he wrote about the Scripture, and how his Holiness said the book couldn't be any good to him at all, 'cause why, it was written in English. Well, your honour, with that it just come across me all at once, may be the Church of Rome has the beautiful prayer in the Latin, and may be that's just the reason why I never knew one word about it, good nor bad, when I don't know one word of the Latin, no more nor the Pope does of English; and then how would the prayer do any good to me, no more nor the book would to him? Well, I just thought I would ask your honour; for sure isn't it the quare thing, if the churches is so different, that they would both have the one prayer, and no difference at all only the Latin and English. But sure, your honour, isn't that all the differ in the world to a poor man like me?

Your honour's servant to command,

PAT MURRAY, of Westmeath.

Pat Murray is quite right; both churches have the beautiful prayer, and a great many other prayers too. These prayers have come down from a very early time of the church, before there were any differences among Christians. The only difference about these prayers is this—the Church of England and Ireland wishes people to understand the prayers of the early church, and the Church of Rome does not; and we agree with Pat Murray, that in the matter of prayer, this makes all the difference in the world.

## HOLY WELLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

MR. EDITOR,—In your number of the LAYMAN for July last, you had the goodness to publish a letter of mine relative to the sending of the blessed stones of Barigowen well to Sebastopol, in order to save the life of one of our brave soldiers engaged in that protracted siege; and as you said that you would wish to hear more about those "holy wells," I now take the liberty of furnishing you with an account of what's done at a few of them, and which I have visited often since my boyhood, in company with a great many others, who went from curiosities to see so many people praying at them.

Within three miles of the flourishing town of Tralee,

and two of the ancient borough of Ardfert, is to be found "Tobar na mult," i.e. Weather's Well, to which thousands of both sexes resort, of all ages, from every corner of Ireland. The blind and lame, halt and maim, the deaf and the dumb, flock there to be cured of their diseases; and such as cannot go themselves are sure to have their "rounds" given by proxy. At the north-east end of the field stands "the holy well," or "great well," as some call it; it is surrounded with a high wall, and is kept carefully locked, open only for the pilgrims, who pay sixpence for washing in its sanctified waters, and is entered by a descent of stone steps. Those who cannot pay for the "great well" wash in the stream which flows from it, gratis; but they are informed that *no* benefit is to be derived without paying for it, and bathing in the large well, where there is a trout, the Saint of the well, which is seen once in every seven years by some favoured worshipper. You cannot imagine the eagerness with which the water is drunk; although, while it is being handed round, more than one diseased person is washing in it in a state of nudity. Whilst this strife is going on at the well for the water, a number of other pilgrims are going round an old tree and a little cabin at the western end of the well, repeating their pater natus, which they tell over by the decades on their beads; such as had no beads counted their ave marias, beginning at the little finger of the left hand, and ending at the little finger on the right: thus they hasten on to a mound of earth, on which is built a low altar of stone, before which they prostrate themselves, and walk round on their bare knees three times, stopping before the western side of the altar each time, and kissing three pictures of stone, which are fastened with mortar into the altar, nine times, and rubbing them nine times more with the right hand, which is to be rubbed as many more times to the part diseased. Those pictures are said to be "constantly sweating." When the devotions of the day are over, the jaded pilgrims hasten to partake of the stimulating beverage, freely offered for sale in several tents, where the lively strains of the bagpipe and fiddle drive away the remembrance of this troublesome penance, and soon afterwards they join in the merry dance.

Barigowen well, which is within a few miles of Askeaton, is also a very great resort, and is accounted famous for working miracles. I saw a priest's sister and nephew at this well, who travelled to it a distance of forty-six miles; and as I wish to have *no* secrets from you, the priest's name is Mr. —, curate of —.\* The field surrounding this, on St. John's eve, was literally crowded with people, some of them *very well dressed*; and as you approach the well, from the road, the low monotonous chant of the patens and ave which fell on the ear is more easily conceived than described.

Three years ago I had a conversation with a man near Belmullet, in Mayo, on the dishonour paid to God by visiting such unhallowed places. "Arrah, hold your tongue, man," said Monaghan, "and leave off wid your talk; in troth, I wish you seen the trout that's in the blessed well near Castlebar, and one side of him fried; for a heretic (a Protestant) saw him one evening swimming about in the well. He ran into the blessed well, and caught the trout, and got him fried by the cook of the Castlebar hotel for his dinner; but when the cook went to turn him, he gave one jump up the chimney, and never stopped till he came back to the well again; for the trout was the blessed Saint of the well." "Did you see the trout in the well after being fried, Mr. Monaghan?" said I. "In troth, then, I did, and seen the side that was fried as brown as a berry from the pan, and, more by token, the other side was as bright as a shilling. Och, but where's the use in talking; you won't believe what a man seen with his eyes!"

Hoping, sir, that you will excuse the length of this letter, I remain, your humble servant till death,

HUMPHREY LEARY.

## FARMING OPERATIONS FOR NOVEMBER.

*Wheat* sowing should be proceeded with as fast as the root crops are removed. Split the drills with the double mould board plough, to raise the manure, and harrow well to spread it equally over the surface, the seed may then be sown broadcast, and ploughed in: or, if the soil be sufficiently loose and friable, it may be put in by the drilling machine; if the latter is not in use on the farm, the land may be ribbed up with the common plough, at any distance from twelve to eighteen inches apart, the seed sown broadcast, and covered with short tined harrows, first in the direction of the ribs or drills, and then across them.

*Winter Vetches* may be sown in the early part of the month. If the land be dry, sow in beds six to eight feet wide, covered from the furrows. A liberal dressing of manure should be applied. Four stone of vetches will seed the Irish acre; and if three or four stone of rye, or winter durum oats be mixed with them, they will protect and support the vetches.

*Potatoes*.—In dry, favourable weather, plant some early potatoes. Apply a liberal quantity of stable manure. Plant in lazy beds, three and a half to four feet wide, and give at least six inches of cover, which will effectively protect them from frost and extreme wet.

\* The names are given, but to avoid giving offence to individuals we omit them.